



# Hand of **HELP**



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*The Truth for Today*

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*Pure, Undeclared Religion*



## The Strength to

# Carry On

By far the most difficult thing we must contend with during our sojourning here on earth is the loss of a loved one. Be they a spouse, a parent, or a child it is never easy, and the heartache such a loss brings about is indescribable.

We mourn, we weep, we remember the times we shared, but we must also go on. For some, going on is easier than it is for others, while others still have no choice but to persevere because they have other souls counting on them.

Such was the case of Sorin Ababei who lost his wife Nicoleta recently. The six children they had together before Nicoleta passed did not permit Sorin to spend much time in mourning because there were mouths to feed and young ones to tend to.

When I went to visit Sorin I did not know what to expect. Having suffered the loss of a wife myself, I expected anything from a broken man, to a man repeatedly asking the age old question of “why”, to someone still in shock and unable to come to terms with the reality of his loss.

To my great surprise I found none of these things. Although he is not an imposing man in stature, I saw a strong man in brother Sorin. I saw a man who understood that one is not beaten when their heart is broken or when tears are streaking down their face. One is only truly beaten when they’ve given up, when they’ve stopped fighting, when they’ve lost faith.

Brother Sorin is a master builder by trade, having worked in Italy and Germany as such, and by so doing was able to provide for his family. Since the passing of his wife he has a new career, that of caring for his children and making sure they get to school on time, have enough to eat, do their homework, have clean clothes, and everything else being a widowed father of six entails.

Although he has been unable to travel and work, brother Sorin has not been idle. While his children were in school he built a greenhouse for himself where he grows vegetables as well as ornamental pumpkins which he sells to earn some money.

When I asked him how he was holding up, brother Sorin just shrugged and said, “with the Lord, all things are possible. I didn’t see it at first, I didn’t see how I’d be able to keep my children together, be a father, earn a living, and keep a roof over their heads, but now I see that as long as we have faith, God makes a way.”

Although my visit was in more of a pastoral capacity, wanting to see how he was holding up spiritually, and even though he never asked for any help, in looking around his home I saw that the heating system was in desperate need of change. At this point I would call it a hazard, and highly likely to malfunction.

Having made some inquiries as to how much a new heating unit would cost for brother Sorin’s home, the cheapest quote I received was the equivalent of \$1500. I believe we can do this kind thing for the Ababei family, and help a father who just wants to keep his family together and works tirelessly to provide for them the best way he can.

None are spared hardship in this life, but as brother Sorin was quick to remind me, with God we can get through the hardships, the heartaches, the heartbreaks and the losses of this present life.

In Christ,  
*Pastor Michael Boldea Sr.*





# Your Forgiveness

The following is not an attempt at an excuse, it is a sincere apology. It has come to my attention that for some, the year-end statements itemizing your giving to this ministry were late in arriving. For this, I am sincerely and profoundly sorry. As a ministry we strive to serve you, the children in our care, as well as those we help in the rural areas of Romania with equal resolve, tenacity and tirelessness.

Due to our key accounting personnel falling ill toward the end of this past year, we were unable to send the statements out as early as we would have liked even though the utmost effort was put forth in attempting to do just that.

We've all been on this spinning rock for longer than a breath, and so each of us knows that life simply happens sometimes, and we cannot control the outcome thereof as much as we would like it to be so. Even so, as I said in the beginning, this is not an excuse, merely an apology and perhaps an explanation of sorts.

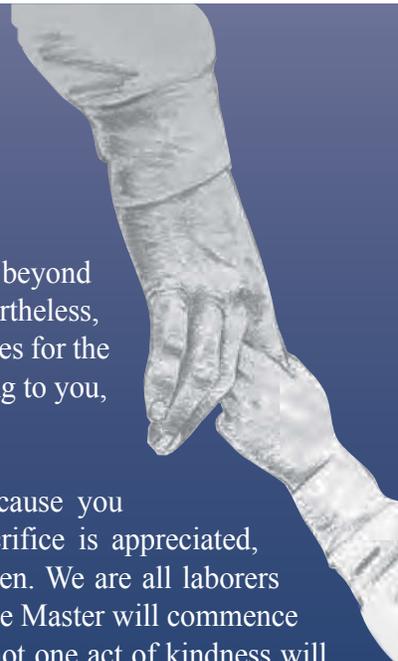
You are our friends, our family, our brothers and sisters in Christ and we love and respect you. As such, you know that

when we say something was beyond our control, it truly was. Nevertheless, once again, my sincerest apologies for the tardiness of the statements getting to you, as I know they are important.

We will strive to do better because you deserve it. Know that your sacrifice is appreciated, and your efforts do not go unseen. We are all laborers in His harvest field, and when the Master will commence the distribution of just reward, not one act of kindness will go unseen or unremembered.

I thank you for standing with us, whether you've been with this ministry for decades, or have come across us only recently. May His grace shine upon you, may His mercy cover you, and may His love light your way.

With love in Christ,  
*Michael Boldea Jr.*



# The *Jesus Factor*



If you show someone love often enough with the requisite consistency, they will inevitably respond, or in the least, inquire as to your motivation and why you would go out of your way for them when they were nothing more than strangers.

As a ministry, ever since we began the work to which the Lord has called us, we've helped wherever help was needed. If someone was hurting, or hungry, or naked, or cold, we reached out and did what we could regardless of their denominational affiliation or lack thereof.

We don't believe in caveats or qualifiers when it comes to helping hurting people, and though we've heard of ministries who help someone only if they come to church first, experience has taught us time and again that there is

nothing in the world more thoroughly able to draw men to Jesus, than the expression of selfless love.

There is something about selflessness that speaks to individuals on a very basic level. Man can't help but respond to selflessness, and simultaneously recognize it as something more than a mere virtue. This is doubly true for those who have never experienced it before.

Although we don't get the question from believers, because they already know our motivation and why we do what we do, nonbelievers will often question why it is that we show them kindness and seemingly give them something for nothing.

Especially when the weather turns, the snow falls, the roads get icy and travel is dangerous, some people are downright incredulous when we tell them that we braved the elements to bring them some food and clothing without requiring anything in return.

My father and I were in just such a predicament recently, and the question of why we would be out in such weather just to help someone we didn't know eventually came up.

Oddly enough the question didn't come from a young man or woman – since the young tend to be more skeptical of strangers – it came from a sweet looking older lady who one could tell had spent far more time in the valley of life than on the mountaintop.

We hadn't planned on staying, since we had a list of other homes to visit and drop off food to, but as we knocked on her door, and she answered, we saw by the look in her eye that we would have to explain our presence on her doorstep and convince her to take the bag of food we'd brought.

Even though someone may be in need, oftentimes their skepticism keeps them from receiving what we attempt to give them until we thoroughly explain why it is we would do such a thing.

After attempting to hand off the bag and seeing the lady we would later learn was named Saveta cross her arms over her chest and back away a step, we began to explain that it was just some food we thought she could use and it would be our privilege to give it to her.

After asking if we could come in and being flatly denied, she did say she would come outside to talk to us. True to her word, after putting on something warmer she came outside. With the look of skepticism still firm upon her countenance, Saveta proceeded to look to the left and to the right, as though she was sure to find someone listening in, then asked in a tone just above a whisper, “why would you give something for nothing?”

Since it was my father that had initiated the conversation with Saveta to begin with, and I didn’t want to jump in and have to further explain who I was, I took a step back and allowed him to answer knowing him to be up to the task.

Without skipping a beat, or taking a moment longer than needed to inhale, my father looked at Saveta and said, “because someone once gave everything for a nothing like me”.

It was an unexpected answer both for Saveta as well as for me. For the next few minutes, standing in front of her doorway, in the most succinct way I’ve heard in a long time, my father shared the message of salvation and the person of Jesus with Saveta, and she stood there and listened as though a master orator was giving the speech of his career.

When my father was done, she gladly accepted the bag of food, as well as our offer to pray with her.

We toil and we labor not because of who we are, but because of who Jesus is. In and of ourselves we are no better or worse than any other individual, no more empathetic or indifferent, but because the heart of Jesus beats in our chest, our actions mirror His actions, and we strive to do what we know He would do.

Jesus doesn’t just make the difference, He is the difference. We serve Him, and in serving Him we strive to likewise serve you as well as those who as yet do not know Him as Lord to the best of our ability. Thank you for making it possible.

With love in Christ,  
*Michael Boldea Jr.*



# The Car



# ing Kind



The

# *Caring Kind*

Men love to divide the world into cliques. If you had to think about it, you'd be surprised at how many times and from how many people you've heard the term, "there are two kinds of people in the world."

From cat lovers and dog lovers, to those who love the taste of soy burgers and those who don't, from those who are concerned with whether or not you can wear white after labor day and those who will wear anything as long as it's clean, everywhere you look there are cliques upon cliques, and each person identifies themselves with one or the other.

Although some of the cliques I've mentioned are trivial, there are many with which individuals identify that are somewhat more serious, as well as more important as it pertains to an individual's humanity and decency.

We can generalize and say there are good people and bad people in the world, and that each one falls into one of two categories, but if we dig a bit deeper, we come to realize that there are many offshoots and side roads that branch off of this main artery we deem as good and bad.

One such avenue that speaks volumes regarding an individual is whether they are the indifferent kind of person or the caring kind of person. I'm not talking about being

caring when someone's watching, or when someone expects you to be caring. There are countless souls in the world who only show empathy when the cameras are rolling, or when it will paint them in a better light than they know they deserve to be painted in.

Such individuals receive their reward here and now, and try as they might, eventually their true character, or lack thereof, boils to the surface for all to see.

I'm talking about those few individuals who truly, genuinely care, who go about doing good when no one is looking because it is as much a part of them as their fingers or toes. It is those individuals who show kindness and exhibit caring even when the kindness they show and the caring they exhibit might go unnoticed by one and all including those closest to them.

One of the things that sets true believers apart from others is that they are, in unanimity, the caring kind of people. I am not speaking of faux believers, or those who call themselves as such only insofar as it profits them somehow. I am referring to the true, unabashed, fearless and selfless followers of Christ Jesus, and it has been thus ever since the primary church.

***“...Caring is something  
God mandates of each of us...”***

We look back on those who walked with Jesus, those who got the privilege and distinct honor to hear Him teach firsthand and see the example He set, and throughout the gospels, and much of the New Testament we are reminded that they too fed the hungry, clothed the naked, cared for those in need, and did good wherever they could. They cared not only for the spiritual needs of those they came across, but often, as they were able, they cared for the physical needs as well.

I realize that nowadays selfishness, greed, and vanity have blended together and made into a de facto religion all their own, and asking God for material things only for the sake of squandering is preached as gospel, but the reality Scripture presents in regards to those who came before us, is one that ought to humble many a soul and drive them to their knees in repentance.

Caring is not a weakness as some insist, nor is it an optional quality to take or to leave as we will. Caring is something God mandates of each of us, whether caring enough to say a prayer for someone who is hurting, caring enough to give someone a drink of water, or caring enough to get out of our comfort zone and just weep with someone who is weeping.

We each have our special callings, we each have our unique gifts, but one thing we all have in common is that Christ has birthed in us hearts of compassion for the hurting, and we do what we can as those who came before us have done.

With love in Christ,  
*Michael Boldea Jr.*



The

# Mild One

Waxing poetic is a difficult task on an empty stomach. Flights of fancy and daydreams about snow angels and white Christmases are all well and good as long as your cupboards aren't empty and there's food on your table.

Hunger has a way of making men more practical. And so, when Christmas rolled around and there was no snow on the ground no one complained or murmured because no snow meant warmer weather, warmer weather meant less firewood, and less firewood meant more money for food.

If we were to say most folks in Romania today are living on a shoestring budget, we would have to redefine the term shoestring. For many a shoestring would look like an anchor rope compared to how little they have to work with.

Even the most optimistic of optimists have watched their optimism wither and die on the vine, and all most are left to contend with is the uncertainty of tomorrow, and the hope that the winter will continue to be a mild one, that they will see the spring, and so have the most difficult part of the year in their rear view.

If you've been a friend of this ministry for any length of time, you've come to know that winters in Romania can be brutal and prolonged. So difficult are the winter months to contend with, that over the years we've taken to purchasing firewood for those living in rural areas in the hope that they could stay warm enough to stave off frostbite or worse.

Thankfully this is the first year in recent memory when winter came with more of a whimper than a howl, and underwhelmed in expectation both in snowfall and plunging temperatures.

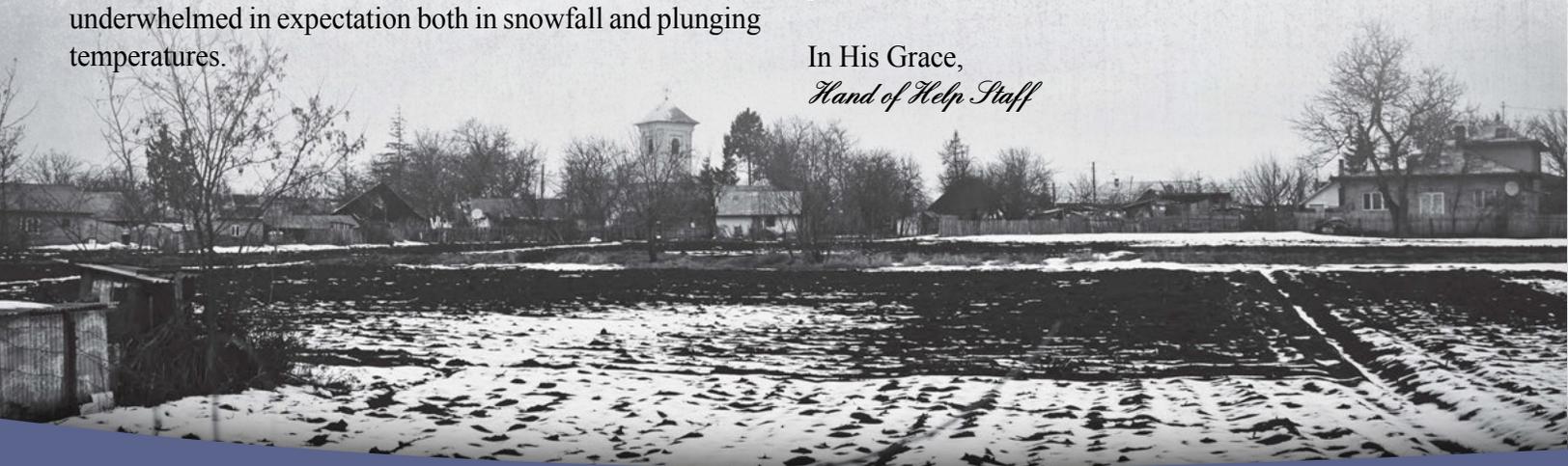
At first, when we saw what was happening on the North American continent, we gritted our teeth and steadied ourselves for the worst of it. With each passing day however, we began to breathe a little easier, because contrary to expectations there was no polar vortex to be had, nor were there any major storms to speak of.

Not that there wasn't a considerable number of scared people stocking up and making preparations for the worst possible outcome. The fact that the talking heads on television were whipping people into frenzy didn't help matters in that respect. To hear them tell the tale the apocalypse was upon us, and unless we had the wherewithal to tunnel ourselves out of the snow, we would remain a nation forever encased in ice. They launched this theory based on what was happening in other parts of the world, but a few weeks into it, their theory turned out to be wholly fruitless and without merit.

The warm weather is still with us for now. There is little snow on the ground, the temperatures are slightly above freezing, and the forecast seems to be more of the same. For countless souls this is an untold blessing, and a gift from the hand of God Himself.

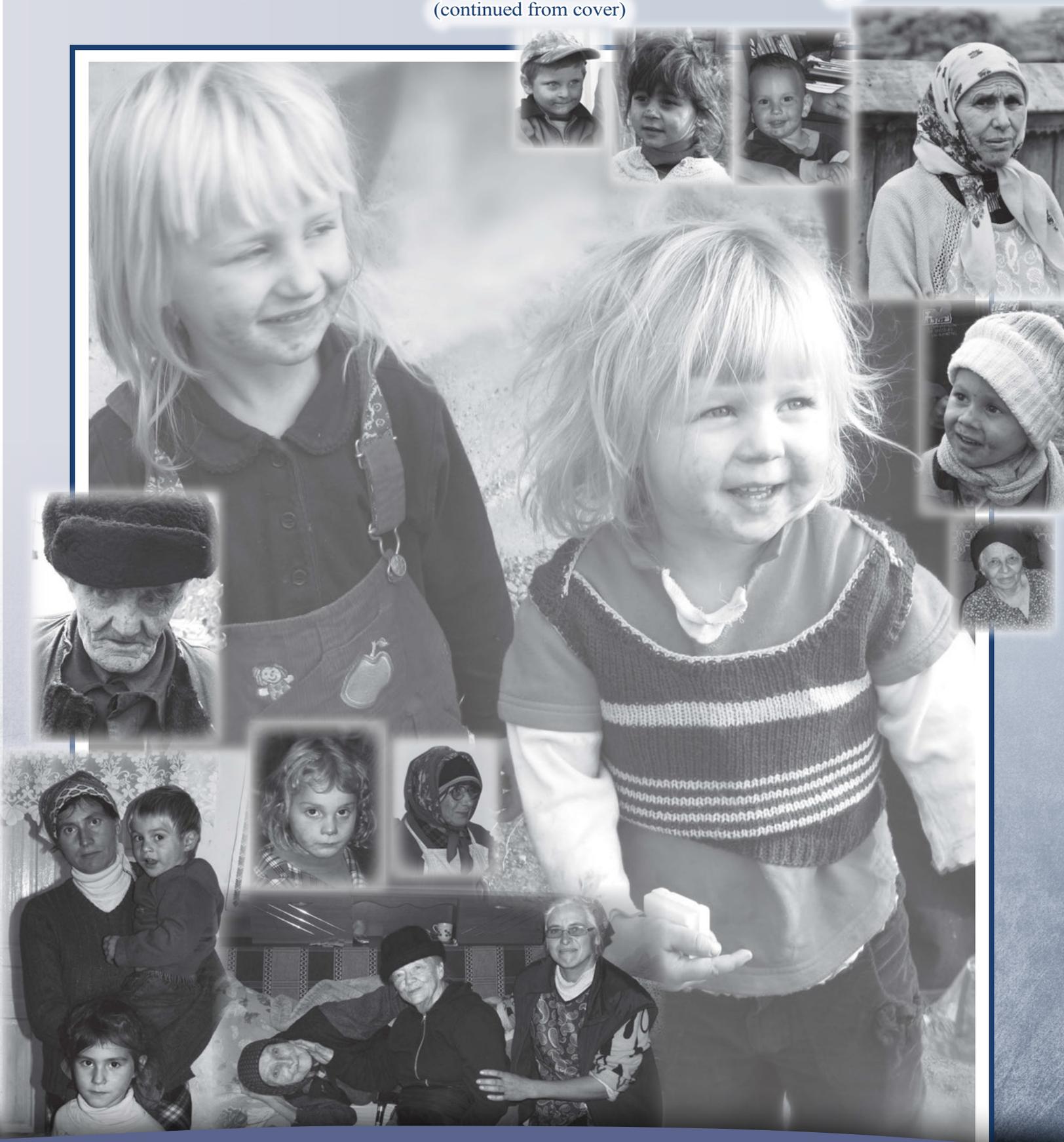
Although at present we are not enduring cold as some of you are, know that you are in our hearts and prayers, and when we say we know what you are going through, they are not just empty words, but a declaration of past experiences. Experience also gives us the confidence to encourage you with words often spoken in stormy weather, "this too shall pass".

In His Grace,  
*Hand of Help Staff*



# Pure, Undeclared Religion

(continued from cover)



# Dear Brethren,

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Perhaps it's in preparation for what is to come, but as of late, I haven't been able to tear myself away from the book of the Acts of the Apostles. Try as I might, the Lord keeps taking me back to this oft overlooked book, and with each reading, with each moment of contemplation, I realize that what we are about to go through is nothing new for the children of God.

We are not treading new ground. We are not trailblazers going where no man has gone before, we are followers of Christ enduring what His followers have always endured, and overcoming as His followers have always overcome. To think that we will be spared scorn, hatred, vitriol and even persecution when all others who came before us have not is to willfully do away with reason and adopt a fancifully infantile mentality that no true son or daughter of God ought ever to entertain.

The Word of God attempts to warn us and prepare us with a purpose in mind. Repeatedly, whether from the mouth of Paul, Peter, James, John, Luke, or Jesus Himself, we are encouraged to steel ourselves and prepare our hearts for the eventuality of having to endure that we might be saved.

The endurance the Bible speaks of is not for a specific length of time, or only until it gets difficult or uncomfortable, but until the end. For only he who endures to the end shall be saved.

It is undeniable that we are witnessing an escalation in vitriol against believers, whether in the Middle East or right here at home, in our own backyard. It is undeniable that the absence of light in many a pulpit has aided the darkness to become all the more pronounced, and the enemy is using every opportunity to further his agenda.

Whether it's large strides or baby steps, it seems the enemy is unconcerned as long as he makes progress, as long as believers can be vilified and criminalized for nothing more than having faith in Christ, and following after Him.

One thing that bears mentioning, something that stuck out as I was reading a certain passage from the aforementioned book of Acts, is that those who were threatening the Apostles and followers of Christ were not merely making empty threats, but had the means, power, and wherewithal to carry out the threats they made against the body of Christ.

It's not as though Peter and John were threatened by some ne'er-do-wells on a street corner or a dark alley, they were threatened by the most powerful religious leaders of their time. They were threatened by powerful men with powerful friends, who could readily carry out everything they said they would.

By the same token, neither Peter nor John were what anyone would call influential men. Both were fishermen, as far removed from the halls of power as one could get, but even so they did not flinch or waver when threats were leveled against them.

Rather than find a way to appease the high priest, rather than find a way to thread the needle and remain faithful to Jesus while keeping their heads down and not making a fuss, they went back to the brethren, and prayed for boldness that they might have the strength to do what needed to be done and stand for Christ no matter the cost.

The day is soon approaching when everyone who names the name of Christ will be forced to choose to either pray for boldness and trust that God will be glorified through their hardships, or compromise the truth for fear of retribution.

On that day, there will no longer be casual Christians, passive Christians, Christmas service Christians or halfhearted Christians, there will only be true Christians, and everyone else. For on that day calling oneself a Christian will come at a steep price. A price I fear far too few today are willing to pay.

With love in Christ,  
*Michael Boldea Jr.*